THE TRANSITION YEARS:

GUIDE TO DISCUSSION AND RESPONSE

RESTRUCTURING OF EDUCATION
CONSULTATION PHASE 1
OCTOBER 1990

THE TRANSITION YEARS WORK TEAM

The Ministry of Education wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the following persons who participated in the development of The Transition Years Issues and Options and Response Guide.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY MINISTER

In April 1989, a major set of initiatives to restructure and enhance the quality of education in Ontario was announced. In response to this announcement, the Ministry of Education established a Learning Programs Secretariat to manage the restructuring initiatives. Restructuring will occur through a planned consultation process involving all partners in education. The consultation process is intended to facilitate discussion and collaborative planning on policy options.

To develop issues and policy options for each of the consultation areas, work teams composed of representatives of school boards, professional associations and the Ministry of Education were created. As part of the consultation process, these work teams will be interacting on an ongoing basis with reaction groups representing a wide diversity of interests. Many other groups and individuals will also be involved in the consultation process to ensure maximum participation by the community.

The following consultation paper has been developed by the Transition Years Work Team. Through the consultation process, the Transition Years Work Team will develop policy recommendations for students in Grades 7, 8 and 9.

I invite you to be a part of the consultation process by being actively involved in the analysis of these issues and policy options. Your participation, reactions and recommendations are vital in building partnerships toward meaningful change. If you have any questions on the consultation process, please contact Mr. Patrick Fleck of the Learning Programs Secretariat at 965-3074.

Robert L. Mitton
Deputy Minister

91-06201/

THE TRANSITION YEARS RESPONSE GUIDE

This guide has been prepared by the Transition Years Work Team to help readers respond to proposals for change in the Transition Years of schooling (Grades 7, 8 and 9), those between the Formative Years (Grades 1 - 6) and the Specialization Years (Grades 10 - 12). The comments received during this consultation process will assist in the development of a policy framework for the Transition Years.

The issues and policy options presented in the guide have been formulated by the Work Team on the basis of province-wide consultations involving a wide variety of groups. The concerns they expressed most frequently in discussions with the Team are listed in the guide.

Both groups and individuals are invited to respond to any or all of the issues outlined here, to raise further issues, and to offer additional proposals.

References are included in the guide to provide a background to each issue. In particular, we would encourage you to read the reports listed on page ten. For additional information or clarification, you may contact the Ministry of Education Regional Office in your area.

All submissions will be considered by the Transition Years Work Team. To facilitate processing, please submit your response as soon as possible and no later than **May 31, 1991** to:

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The Context for Change

Ontario students live in a society that is in the midst of rapid and pervasive change. This change is exemplified by the increasing diversity in our population, shifts in family structure, and changing expectations in the workplace. If our schools are to continue to prepare young people for living productive and satisfying lives, they must respond to the changing needs and expectations of our society.

Demands have risen at both provincial and local levels to make our education system more accountable to the public. The people of Ontario, and parents in particular, want to know what elementary and secondary schools are doing to prepare students for a changing present and an increasingly uncertain future. They also want to know how successful schools are in this preparation. In addition, the rapidly changing labour market with its emphasis on knowledge-based industries is creating growing demands for a better educated work force.

All of these trends convinced the Ontario government that the time had come to reassess the system to see how adequately it was meeting contemporary needs.

Restructuring of Education

The general directions announced in April 1989 have formed the basis for a major set of initiatives that has become known as the restructuring of education. It includes all aspects of our education system from Junior Kindergarten to the end of secondary school.

In this restructuring initiative, Grades 7, 8, and 9 have been identified as critical. They have been termed the Transition Years because during these years students make two major transitions: from childhood to adolescence and from elementary school to secondary school. The transition from childhood to adolescence requires an adjustment to significant physical, emotional, and social changes. The transition from elementary to secondary school requires an adjustment to new friends and classmates, teachers, rules and routines, and to different kinds of physical environments, school organizations and instructional programs.

Moreover, early adolescents today confront choices and pressures not experienced by previous generations. The media, especially television, strongly influences their beliefs and values, and changes in the traditional family structure require many students to seek additional support from the school.

To assist students during these transitions the government made a commitment to

- establish a core curriculum for grades 7 to 9
- eliminate streaming in grade 9
- improve support for students in making the transition from elementary to secondary school and from the Transition Years to the Specialization Years (Grades 10-12).

At the end of Grade 8, students are now required to make significant decisions about their program. The current programs in Grade 9 are designed according to three levels of difficulty, called basic, general and advanced. Since the introduction of this policy in 1984, enrolment in advanced-level courses has steadily increased because students and parents recognize that these courses maximize educational and career

opportunities. At the same time, enrolment has dropped sharply in schools that specialize in basic-level and vocational programs.

In recognition of this reality, the government is proposing a core curriculum for Grades 7, 8 and 9 that will provide all students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, values and skills most valued by society. Students will no longer be formally streamed in Grade 9, but will have an extra year to make important educational decisions. Since students will be a year older and will have a year to experience secondary school courses and receive career and education counselling, they will be more mature and better informed to make choices.

Numerous research studies about the social and academic effects of streaming have produced no clear evidence to support the streaming of students at an early age. Rather, the evidence suggests that streaming has negative effects on the social, intellectual and emotional development of early adolescents.

Eliminating the three levels of difficulty in Grade 9 and providing a core curriculum for students in Grades 7, 8, and 9 does not mean that individual differences will be ignored. These changes are intended to better accommodate the diversity of students' interests, needs and abilities and meet the rising expectations of society. Flexible and informal groupings of students will be encouraged to allow for more personalized instruction, and appropriate remediation and enrichment activities.

In their literature review for the Ministry of Education, principal investigators, Hargreaves and Earle conclude:

> **In many ways, "destreaming" is a distraction from the fundamental issues of providing effectively for students in the Transition Years and giving all students sufficient opportunity to learn. Destreaming really only deals with the issue of putting bodies into rooms. One of the reasons why much of the research on the academic effects of destreaming is inconclusive is that it does not address what is done with those bodies once they have been placed in classrooms. Students in destreamed classes can be taught many different things in many different ways. Destreaming creates an opportunity for them to be taught these things together. The critical issues for their learning are really what they are taught (curriculum) and how they are taught (instruction). More important than the management of destreaming is the meaning of it for those who work with destreamed classes. For this reason, we view destreaming as a preliminary or subsidiary issue (p.16).**

In a changing labour market, schools must provide timely and appropriate career information in order to motivate students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills they will need and to enable them to make choices that will broaden their career opportunities. Improved support will therefore be provided for students making the transition from elementary to secondary school and moving from the Transition Years to future courses in secondary school and beyond.

Hargreaves, A., Earle, L. (In Press). Rights of Passage: A Review of Selected Research About Schooling in the Transition Years. Ministry of Education, Toronto.

Action Plan for the Transition Years Initiative

Following the announcement of the restructuring initiatives, a five-year Action Plan[1] was developed. The first year (1989-90) of the Action Plan included the following activities:

(1) Identification of issues and options through meetings with focus groups across the province.

(2) Initiation of research projects as follows:

- A review of selected research about schooling in the Transition Years. (Available 1990)
- Exemplary models and strategies for guidance and career education. (Available 1991)
- Current Ontario practice consistent with the restructuring initiatives direction in the Transition Years. (Available 1990)
- Policy analysis of selected jurisdictions outside Ontario. (Available 1991)
- Research review of teaching strategies appropriate for Transition Years. (Available 1991)

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[1] The Ministry of Education Action Plan Restructuring the Education System: A Framework for Consultation 1989-94 (Draft) is available from the Learning Programs Secretariat.

(3) Initiation of more than 60 two-year pilot projects focusing on the following topics:

- the needs of the adolescent learner in English- and French-language schools;
- the educational goals of multiculturalism and ethnocultural equity;
- the needs of groups such as Native students;
- the need to ensure full participation of both girls and boys in all aspects of the school program;
- the components of a core curriculum and appropriate teaching strategies;
- unique school organization for innovative groupings of students;
- improved student assessment techniques and ways of reporting student achievement;
- facilitating transitions from Grade 6 to Grade 10;
- innovative teacher in-service programs;
- remediation and enrichment programs;
- guidance and special education programs and services;
- involvement of the community, particularly parents or guardians;
- assisting students to explore career choices.

(4) Development of Guide for Discussion and Response.

Identification of Issues, Options and Proposed Directions

During the 1989-90 school year, the Transition Years Work Team met with groups throughout the province, including students, parents, teachers, business people, trustees, and school board officials. Individuals from the six Ministry of Education regional offices assisted in setting up the meetings. We called these groups "focus groups" because they provided the focus for this guide.

Each focus group was invited to state its concerns about existing practice in Grades 7, 8 and 9 and to identify significant issues arising from these concerns. They were also asked to suggest policy options related to each of these issues.

The Work Team selected the issues that were considered significant by all of the focus groups across the province, and used them as the basis for this discussion and response guide.

In addition, we used existing Ontario research and reports, such as the Select Committee Report[1], research from the Ministry of Education's Student Retention and Transition Project[2], reviews on the implementation of the Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1984 policy and Ministry of Education September Report data, as well as some research and reports from other jurisdictions[3].

New education policies in other provinces such as British Columbia[4] and Saskatchewan[5], as well as information on current social, economic and demographic trends, were also analyzed by the Work Team.

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1 Government of Ontario. 1988. First Report of the Select Committee. Toronto.

2 Sullivan, M. 1988. A Comparative Analysis of Drop-outs and Non Drop-outs in Ontario Secondary Schools. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

King, A.J.C. 1988. Improving Student Retention in Ontario Secondary Schools. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

Stamp, R.M. 1988. Ontario Secondary School Program Innovations and Student Retention Rates: 1920s-1970s. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

Lawton, S.B., Leithwood, K.A. 1988. Student Retention in Ontario High Schools: Policies, Practices and Prospects. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

Karp, E. 1988. The Drop-out Phenomenon in Ontario Secondary Schools. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

MacKay R. 1988. Native Student Drop-out Study. Ministry of Government Services, Publication Ontario, Toronto.

3 Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. 1989. Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C.

4 British Columbia, Ministry of Education. 1989. Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future. (Draft).

5 Saskatchewan Education. 1987. Understanding the Common Essential Learnings. Regina.

Organization of the Response Guide

The ten issues in this guide address three major questions. These are:

- What are the characteristics and needs of the early adolescent learner?
- What expectations do we hold for these learners?
- How should the components of the school (program, services and organization) and teacher education for the Transition Years be restructured?

Each of the ten issues is organized according to:

Present Policy:

The policy for Grades 7, 8 and 9 is described in Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989 (OSIS). This document is included for information.

Concerns Identified:

These include some of the major concerns that were identified in the consultation process during 1989-90.

Proposed Direction:

This is the policy direction proposed by the Work Team on the basis of suggestions offered and concerns expressed during the consultation process and on the findings of research. Respondents are invited to comment on this direction and to make recommendations.

Options:

These options, identified in the consultation process during 1989-90, suggest ways to move education policy in the direction proposed. Respondents are invited to indicate a preferred option(s) and/or provide additional options and suggestions.

Comments and suggestions regarding additional issues and options are also invited.

Recommended Reading

The Ontario Ministry of Education commissioned a review of existing research dealing with the issues in this paper. This report, prepared by A. Hargreaves and L. Earle, will provide a useful resource in considering the issues and options for the Transition Years. A review of guidance programs and services, by S. Ziegler and M. Levi, will provide a useful resource for Issue 8.

Ontario Teachers' Federation affiliates have also produced reports that are relevant to the issues in this paper. These reports include:

King, A.J.C. (1986) The Adolescent Experience. Research Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario, M4A 2P3.

King, A.J.C., Peart, M.J. (1988) The Teaching Experience. Research Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario, M4A 2P3.

King, A.J.C. (1990) The Good School. Research Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario, M4A 2P3.

Oppenheimer, J. (1990) Getting It Right: Meeting the Needs of the Early Adolescent Learner. Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, 1260 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 2B8.

ISSUE 1: ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT EARLY ADOLESCENTS DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS (GRADES 7, 8 AND 9)

Present Policy:

The policy document Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions, 1989 (OSIS) describes the period of adolescence in Section 3.1 (p. 12).

Concerns Identified:

- Policies for the Transition Years must be based both on the needs of the early adolescent learner and on the changing expectations of society.
- Many adolescents are trying to maintain their own cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Franco-Ontarian students have particular challenges while trying to maintain their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- While adolescents are changing developmentally they must often move within the school system. This move may involve changes in friends and classmates as well as in school culture, teaching methods and learning expectations.
- In moving from Grade 8 to 9, students are required to make educational decisions that may have a significant impact on their future.
- Although young adolescents want to distance themselves from their role as a child, they are unprepared for independence. They tend to depend on their friends and classmates for support while asserting their independence by rebelling against authority, particularly parents and teachers.

Proposed Direction

Policies for the Transition Years should be based more thoroughly on the following assumptions about the needs and characteristics of early adolescents:

- **Early adolescence is a particularly challenging period because transitions are occurring in almost every area of students' lives.**

- **During the Transition Years some of the developmental tasks facing early adolescents are:**
  - **developing independence**
  - **developing their identity: searching for self primarily in relation to peers**
  - **establishing personal values and philosophy**
  - **developing self-esteem**
  - **exploring and accepting their sexuality**
  - **learning to accept and come to terms with their own bodies**
  - **developing personal relationships with their friends and classmates (peer group) and with particular adults**
  - **exploring reality through personal experience**

- **During this period adolescents exhibit considerable variability both in their rate of intellectual development and in academic achievement.**

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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1.1: WHAT NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTIC OF EARLY ADOLESCENT LEARNERS MUST BE CONSIDERED IN PLANNING FOR THEIR EDUCATION IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 2: EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS

Present Policy:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate, Senior, 1989 states that the Goals of Education are the basis for developing programs in Grades 7, 8 and 9. These goals are described in Section 1.3 (pp. 3, 4).

Concerns Identified:

- There should be a clear set of expectations that can be understood by educators and the general public.
- The present Goals of Education are too abstract to provide guidance in planning programs.
- Expectations should be based on current learning theory.
- Society has conflicting expectations about what students should be learning in school.

Proposed Direction:

In view of the changing nature of society and new knowledge about how children learn, learning expectations for students in the Transition Years should be based on the developmental needs of the early adolescent learner in the context of family, community (local and global), leisure and work, and research on the learning process.

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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2.1: WHAT VALUES, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS SHOULD STUDENTS ACQUIRE DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 3: CORE CURRICULUM

Curriculum includes all student experiences for which the school is responsible. Core curriculum refers to the curriculum that has been defined as essential for all students in Ontario.

Present Policy:

The provincial core curriculum policy for Grades 7 and 8 is described in the policy circular Ontario Schools: Intermediate, Senior, 1989 (OSIS), Section 3.4 (pp.14, 15).

For Grade 9, no core curriculum has been defined. Core curriculum for Grades 9 through 12/OAC includes the 16 compulsory credits identified in OSIS as leading to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), Section 4.10 (pp.19, 20).

Concerns Identified:

- During the past five years new subject guidelines have been introduced into Ontario schools. School boards have made a major commitment to curriculum development and resources, such as textbooks, for these new guidelines.
- Under existing policies, overcrowding of the curriculum, fragmentation of knowledge, an academic bias in program and method, and an overemphasis on mastery of content are perceived concerns among educators.
- Overcrowding of the curriculum may result in certain subject areas being under-represented.
- The present credit system should be redefined in terms of a better measure of achievement than number of hours[1].

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[1] A credit is granted to a student by a principal in recognition of the successful completion of a course for which a minimum of 110 hours has been scheduled. Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, Section 4.4 (p.17).

- **Since information is growing rapidly in all areas of study, there is a need to define which information is essential and meaningful to early adolescent learners and to show them how it influences their lives.**

- **Students who fail to obtain credits in Grade 9 may become candidates for dropping out of school.**

- **There are many levels of language fluency in French among francophone students of the same age and in the same school.**

Proposed Direction

- **A core curriculum will be identified that is based on the developmental needs of young adolescent learners and provides continuity with the curriculum of the periods both before and after the Transition Years.**

- **Core curriculum will reinforce essential competencies acquired in the Formative Years and will introduce new competencies that will enable students to experience success in future endeavours.**

- **Core curriculum will reinforce the principles of gender, race and ethnocultural equity.**

- **A new language policy and program is required to meet the needs created by the application of Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in French-language schools.**

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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3.1: HOW SHOULD THE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, VALUES AND SKILLS OF A CORE CURRICULUM BE DESCRIBED?

Components of the core curriculum should be described in terms of one or more of the following:

Traditional Subjects and Instructional Time Allocation

Option 3.1(a)
The provincial core curriculum policy should remain as described in OSIS for Grades 7 and 8 and should include Grade 9 in the same policy.

Option 3.1(b)
The provincial core curriculum policy should include other subject groupings and time allocations.

Traditional Subjects and No Instructional Time Allocation

Option 3.1(c)
The provincial core curriculum policy should be as described in 3.1(a) No time allocations should be specified.

Option 3.1(d)
The provincial core curriculum policy should include other subject groupings with no time allocations.

Essential Competencies and Outcomes

Option 3.1(e)
The provincial core curriculum policy should be described in terms of essential competencies without specific reference to subject disciplines. Expected outcomes in each of these should be specified at the end of the Transition Years. Essential competencies could include development of knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical and creative thinking
- Awareness and use of technology
- Independent learning
- Decision-making
- Interpersonal and social relationships
- Appreciation of forms of artistic expression

Option 3.1(f)
The provincial core curriculum policy should be defined in terms of essential competencies with specific reference to subject disciplines. Expected outcomes in each of these areas should be specified at the end of the Transition Years.

Option 3.1(g)
The provincial core curriculum policy should include:

(1) Cross-curricular learning, in which thinking processes, literacy, numeracy, communication, independent learning, personal and societal values and technology are taught in all subject areas.
(2) Learning about self, society and physical environments, including social and Canadian Studies, health, physical education, and science.
(3) Learning and communications, which includes mathematics, language arts, French as a second language, English as a second language and English skills development.
(4) Learning in the arts (dance, drama, music and visual arts).

The above option uses the components proposed in the Formative Years Working Paper 1990[1]

Other Categories for Organizing Knowledge

Option 3.1(h)
The provincial core curriculum policy should be defined on the basis of other categories for organizing knowledge.

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[1] The Formative Years Working Paper and Consultation Paper (1990) describes the context for the education of students in the first six years of formal schooling. Issues and options are identified for purposes of consultation. Copies of this paper are available from the Learning Programs Secretariat.

3.1: HOW SHOULD THE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, VALUES AND SKILLS OF A CORE CURRICULUM BE DESCRIBED?

3.2: WHAT ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF A CORE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS?

Option 3.2(a)
The Ministry of Education should establish specific policies and programs to meet the learning needs of students covered by Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Option 3.2(b)
The Ministry of Education should mandate a policy of "animation culturelle" to support young Franco-Ontarian students in the maintenance of their cultural identity.

3.2: WHAT ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF A CORE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS?

3.3: WHAT KIND OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS SHOULD THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEVELOP?

Option 3.3(a)

The Ministry of Education should ensure that two kinds of documents are developed for the core curriculum:

- **policy documents that identify learning expectations and provide a rationale for the expectations**
- **support documents that provide "good ideas" about how to implement the policy**

3.3: WHAT KIND OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS SHOULD THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEVELOP?

3.4: HOW SHOULD THE CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS BE DEVELOPED?

Option 3.4(a)
The Ministry of Education should set up a provincial curriculum advisory committee and writing teams to develop curriculum policy guidelines.

Option 3.4(b)
The Ministry of Education should contract school boards, or a consortium of boards, federations and/or subject associations to develop curriculum support documents.

Option 3.4(c)
Other strategies should be used to develop provincial curriculum policy and support documents.

3.4: HOW SHOULD THE CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS BE DEVELOPED?

3.5: HOW SHOULD TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION BE INCLUDED IN THE TRANSITION YEARS CORE CURRICULUM?

Present Policy:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989, describes the present policy on Business and Technological Education in Section 5.8 (p. 25).

Concerns Identified

A higher level of technological expertise is required in the new global economy.

Proposed Direction

As part of the restructuring, the government announced its intentions to redesign Technological Education[1].

Option 3.5(a)
Fully integrate technological education into the core curriculum.

Option 3.5(b)
Provide an elective course in technological education.

Option 3.5(c)
Provide a required area of study in technological education with both core and elective components.

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1 *The Technological Education Consultation Paper (1990) describes the context for Technological Education for all students from JK to the end of Grade 12/OAC. Issues and options are identified for purposes of consultation. Copies of this paper are available from the Learning Programs Secretariat.*

3.5: HOW SHOULD TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION BE INCLUDED IN THE TRANSITION YEARS CORE CURRICULUM?

ISSUE 4: ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS

Present Policy

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989, Sections 4.14 (p. 21), 4.15 (pp 21, 22) and 7 (p. 35), describes the policy on assessment, evaluation and reporting.

Concerns Identified

- Assessment strategies should be consistent during the Transition Years, especially as students move from one school to another.
- Teachers need to have more relevant and readily accessible information about students as they progress through the Transition Years in order to provide them with more personalized instruction.
- Students and parents require information to assist them in choosing programs in the Specialization Years.
- Grading and testing are deeply embedded in the school culture and are currently given excessive weight in the overall structure of student assessment.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on self-evaluation to encourage students to be partners in the process of evaluating the progress being made in attaining their goals.

Proposed Direction

- Identification, assessment and evaluation of students' progress, interests, strengths and needs should be continuous throughout the Transition Years and should involve students, teachers and parents/guardians.
- Assessment should be unbiased and culturally sensitive, taking into account linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as the minority-language setting.

- **The use by many schools and teachers of a wide variety of assessment strategies, including student/teacher conferencing, portfolios, anecdotal records, observations and diagnostic tests, should be strongly encouraged.**

Comment on Proposed Direction:

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4.1: TEACHER/SCHOOL BOARD RESPONSIBILITY

Option 4.1(a)
School boards and teachers should ensure the use of a variety of diagnostic assessment and evaluation instruments that are sensitive both to language and to cultural background. The information provided by these instruments should be used to modify student programs in the Transition Years.

Option 4.1(b)
School boards should strive for increased coordination and coherence in assessment strategies for students throughout the Transition Years.

Option 4.1(c)
School boards should design reporting mechanisms to provide accurate and detailed information that can be used to design educational plans during the Transition Years and beyond.

4.1.1: WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE USED TO PROMOTE STUDENTS TO PROGRAMS IN THE SPECIALIZATION YEARS?

4.1.2: WHAT ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES SHOULD BE USED TO DETERMINE STUDENTS' PROGRESS THROUGH THE TRANSITION YEARS AND INTO THE SPECIALIZATION YEARS?

4.1.3: WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION SHOULD PARENTS/GUARDIANS RECEIVE ABOUT STUDENTS' PROGRESS DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS?

4.2: PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: BENCHMARKS

Benchmarks are statements of critical learning outcomes that students are expected to demonstrate by a certain point in time, such as the end of a particular grade or period of years.

Concerns Identified:

- The critical learning outcomes measured in a provincial review need to be identified.
- Several school boards have already developed assessment programs that include benchmarks.
- Several schools boards have expressed willingness to work with the Ministry of Education in developing measures (such as benchmarks) to ensure increased accountability.

Proposed Direction:

- In 1987 the government announced its intentions to establish provincial benchmarks as an accountability measure.
- Provincial benchmarks will identify critical learning outcomes and will be based on new Ministry of Education policy on curriculum.
- Provincial benchmarks will be developed in collaboration with school boards, federations and other associations. These benchmarks will provide:
  - reference points for reporting to students, parents, educators and other stakeholders
  - support for school boards in developing their own measures of accountability
  - support for school boards and schools in planning to meet the needs of individual students
  - reference points to assist in the Ministry of Education's curriculum monitoring process across the province
  - a way for the government to demonstrate accountability at the provincial level

Comments on Proposed Direction:

Option 4.2(a)
Benchmarks should be identified at the end of the Formative Years (Grade 6) only.

Option 4.2(b)
Benchmarks should be identified at the end of the Formative (Grade 6) and the Transition Years (Grade 9).

4.2.1:	SHOULD BENCHMARKS BE IDENTIFIED AT THE END OF THE TRANSITION YEARS?

4.2.2: WHAT SHOULD BE THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPORTING TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 5: SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

School organization refers to the way schools are organized according to grades and the way the school day (timetable) is arranged. It also refers to the way students are grouped for instructional purposes. This is often described as streaming[1].

Present Policy:

Ministry of Education policy mandates instructional time and length of the school year and school day. Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989, Section 4.6 (p.17) also mandates the offering of courses in Grade 9 at three levels of difficulty: basic, general and advanced. Open-level course are not permitted, but schools may offer bilevel or multigrade classes.

School boards can organize schools in terms of grade groupings to meet their local needs.

The most familiar way of organizing students at present is the grade system, and the most common elementary school organization is K-Grade 8.

Concerns Identified

- Eliminating levels of difficulty in Grade 9 poses a challenge for teaching if the current organizational structure is retained.
- As part of the transition from elementary to secondary school, students may move from a small school with self-contained classes to a large, departmentalized school.
- The current fragmented school day organized on a rotary and/or semestered schedule may not provide a supportive environment for students in the Transition Years.
- Students are expected to make choices of levels of difficulty during a period when they may be experiencing significant developmental changes and required to change schools as well.

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[1] The term "destreaming" is often used to refer to the restructuring initiatives direction to eliminate levels of difficulty (streaming) in Grade 9.

- **Since the implementation of OSIS, enrolment is increasing in advanced-level courses and decreasing in general-and basic-level courses because parents and students believe that advanced-level courses enhance the opportunities for program and career selection in high school and beyond.**

Proposed Direction:

- **Organizing instruction according to three levels of difficulty as defined in Section 4.6 of OSIS will be discontinued in Grade 9.**

- **School organizational strategies should provide for more personalized instruction by allowing for flexible groupings of students across and within grades.**

- **Students should be given opportunities to relate to a limited number of teachers for extended periods of time.**

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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Option 5.1(a)
Provincial policies should enable school boards to organize the school day to allow a block of time for core curriculum and a block of time for elective programs. The school day should be structured to allow small teams of teachers to plan and work together to teach the core curriculum to a group of students.

Option 5.2(b)
Provincial policies should enable school boards to organize the school day to allow for block timetabling in which no specific period of time is set aside for a particular subject and for gradually increasing the amount of time for rotary and decreasing the amount of time for block timetabling from Grade 7 through Grade 9.

Option 5.3(c)
The provincial core curriculum should require a maximum of 80% of the instructional time. The remainder of the time (20%) should be allowed for locally developed programs (electives).

5.1: HOW SHOULD THE SCHOOL DAY BE ORGANIZED TO ALLOW FOR FLEXIBLE GROUPINGS OF STUDENTS AND MORE PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION?

ISSUE 6: SCHOOLS OFFERING SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

Some schools and programs have been established as alternatives to address the needs or specialized interests of groups of students. Examples include vocational schools, arts schools, immersion schools/programs and gifted schools/programs.

Present Policy:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Division, 1989, Section 5.15, (p.29) deals with the establishment of Specialized Schools. Section 2.4, National Languages (p.7), describes provisions for Extended and French Immersion programs.

Current Concerns:

- Certain students may benefit from a specialized program and/or school, depending on the scope and degree of their special needs or interests.
- Enrolment in many vocational schools is decreasing.
- Specialized schools have an impact on the community schools.

Proposed Direction:

- Boards may operate specialized schools provided that all students have access to a common core curriculum in the Transition Years.

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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6.1: SHOULD STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS?

6.2: HOW SHOULD EXTENDED AND IMMERSION FRENCH PROGRAMS BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CORE CURRICULUM?

Option 6.2(a)
A requisite number of hours of instruction in French for extended and immersion French programs should be included as part of the core curriculum.

Option 6.2(b)
Students enrolled in extended French programs should accumulate a minimum of 1,440 hours of French instruction by the end of the Transition Years. Students enrolled in immersion French programs should accumulate a minimum of 4,160 hours of French instruction by the end of the Transition Years.

6.2: HOW SHOULD EXTENDED AND IMMERSION FRENCH PROGRAMS BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CORE CURRICULUM?

ISSUE 7: EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Present Policy:

Since the implementation of Bill 82 in 1985, all school boards in Ontario are required to provide special education programs and services for exceptional pupils.

Pupils are identified as exceptional through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), a mandated school board committee that also decides on the placement and reviews the appropriateness of both placement and program.

The regular curriculum is modified to meet the needs of the exceptional student. The special education program is based on continuous assessment and often requires additional support services.

Parents are encouraged to be active participants in the identification, placement and review process, and have the right to appeal decisions made by the committee.

Concerns Identified:

The introduction of a core curriculum and the elimination of levels of difficulty may not allow exceptional students to progress at a rate appropriate for them.

Proposed Direction:

- A core curriculum with flexible groupings will allow for more personalized instruction for all students.
- Wherever possible, students identified through IPRCs should be provided with opportunities to work and socialize with students in regular programs.

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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7.1: WHAT SUPPORT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS DURING THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 8: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Services refer to all services provided by agencies, ministries (including the Ministry of Education), boards of education, and individuals within the school and within the community.

Present Policy:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989 (OSIS) describes the policy for program and services in Section 2.2, (p. 5).

Identified Concerns:

- Guidance services must reflect the changing trends in the economy.
- In a minority setting, support services are needed to facilitate cultural and language retention for French-language students and create a community for the French-language population.
- The provision of adequate support services for the adolescent learner is critical in order to provide for those students who lack the presence of a supportive adult in their home, for those who suffer from the constraints of poverty, for those who come from sexually or physically abusive environments, and for those who require significant additional emotional support[1].
- For early adolescents, the influence of peers is very strong.

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[1] Recommended reading: Offord, D.R., Boyle, M.H. and Racine, Y.A. (1990) Children at Risk. Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, Toronto.

Proposed Direction:

- The Guidance and Counselling focus should shift from personal counselling to career counselling and educational planning.
- Schools should provide for an integrated Support Services Centre where students and parents can receive not only career counselling and guidance services, but other support services, such as special education, links to the workplace and referrals to community social services.
- Support services to deal with social and certain medical needs must be readily accessible to students.

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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8.1: CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Option 8.1(a)
Qualified staff should be assigned to deliver a planned program of career education, with clear goals and objectives for every student in each of the Transition Years.

Option 8.1(b)
The majority of school staff should be involved in the career counselling and educational planning program in consultation with a qualified guidance counsellor.

Option 8.1(c)
Schools should be required to develop a career and educational plan for each student in consultation with guidance staff, parents and students. It should be filed in each Ontario Student's Record folder in each of the Transition Years.

Option 8.1(d)
Provision should be made to allow for career, educational and related counselling to take place in a diversity of settings. These would include student access to centralized support services, a guidance counsellor, a staff member who knows the student well, student support groups and individual peer support.

Option 8.1(e)
A career education program should allow all students opportunities for involvement with the community. This should include job shadowing, work experience, work observation and/or mentorship.

8.1.1: HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS ENSURE APPROPRIATE CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

8.1.2: WHO SHOULD HAVE THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CAREER COUNSELLING AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

8.1.3: WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE STAFF IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

8.2: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COUNSELLING

Option 8.2(a)
Other ministries and agencies that provide support services to students should renew efforts to ensure that these services are available and accessible to students.

Option 8.2(b)
School boards should encourage peer counselling to help students deal with their problems.

8.2.1: WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES SHOULD EXIST TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

8.2.2: HOW SHOULD PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COUNSELLING BE ORGANIZED AND DELIVERED FOR STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

8.2.3: WHO SHOULD ASSUME THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COUNSELLING FOR STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 9: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Present Policy:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, 1989 (OSIS) Sections 1.4 (p.4) 5.10 (pp 26-27), 5.11 (p.27) and 5.17 (p.29), describes ways in which the community can become involved.

Identified Concerns:

- Members of the community can assist in providing relevant and timely career education that is important in today's marketplace.
- The impact of the family and the community on students' lives is particularly strong during the early years of adolescence.
- Students should participate actively in the life of the community.

Proposed Direction:

Formal and informal partnerships between the school and other parts of the community will be encouraged. Examples of formal partnerships that have enhanced learning opportunities for students are Industry-Education Councils, Community Career Information Centres, and School-College Linkage Programs.

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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9.1: HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY ENHANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STUDENTS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ISSUE 10: TEACHER PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATION[1]

Present Policy:

Certification requirements for teachers are stated in Regulation 269, Ontario Teachers' Qualifications, 1988, which sets out the types of certification programs that teachers require to teach in Grades 7, 8 and 9.

Concerns Identified:

- Teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, is a critical factor in the restructuring of education in Ontario.
- Elementary and secondary teachers often have different understandings about learning/teaching and may have little contact with their colleagues in the other panel. Teacher education programs are generally divided into elementary and secondary, with little specific focus on students in the Transition Years.
- There is a recognized shortage of teachers in French-language schools.
- Role models from various ethnocultural and racial backgrounds are needed to reflect Ontario's cultural diversity.
- Teacher education, pre-service and in-service, is seen as fragmented, and unrelated to the real needs of teachers and current societal conditions.

Proposed Direction:

- Pre-service and in-service teacher education should familiarize teachers with the issues that concern both elementary and secondary educators.
- Pre-service and in-service programs should prepare francophone administrators and teachers to function in French-language minority schools in Ontario.

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[1] Pre-service Education refers to teacher education programs that are required to obtain a teaching certificate. In-service Education refers to the programs that are available to practising teachers.

- **Teacher education, pre-service and in-service, should form a coherent system that is consistently related to the needs of the teacher and that responds to societal expectations.**

Comments on Proposed Direction:

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Option 10(a)
New Additional Qualifications[1] courses should be developed for teachers in the Transition Years.

Option 10(b)
In-service programs should be developed for out-of-province/country French-language teachers to enable them to better understand Franco-Ontarian language and culture as well as the wider educational issues in the province.

Option 10(c)
Alternative strategies other than Additional Qualifications courses should be developed.

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[1] Additional qualifications courses are offered by Faculties of Education to provide teachers with opportunities to obtain the necessary additional qualification to teach in certain areas (e.g., Primary Division, Science)

Option 10(d)
Teacher Apprenticeship Programs intended to facilitate the entry of groups (e.g., Native people) who are currently under-represented in the profession should be initiated. Upon successful completion of such a program, participants would be guaranteed admission to a faculty of education.

Option 10(e)
School boards should develop and assume responsibility for the delivery of the in-service programs for teachers in the Transition Years.

Option 10(f)
Specific schools should be the location for a substantial part of teacher education programs. This arrangement would allow for extensive "on-site" education for prospective teachers, and would be supplemented by instruction at the university campus.

10.1: HOW SHOULD TEACHER EDUCATION BE RESTRUCTURED TO ASSIST TEACHERS WITH THE CHANGES IN THE TRANSITION YEARS?

ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND OPTIONS